

PROFILE: Scott Schwindaman

NICHE MASTER

Scott Schwindaman finds success staying true to specialized markets

BY DANIEL MCCOY

If there's one thing that Scott Schwindaman knows, it's how to market to a niche.

As the president and CEO of Lubrication Engineers Inc., he runs a company that provides high-end products designed for very specific uses by industrial customers.

The great thing about being a niche, he says, is that you're always in demand.

In fact, in the last few years, the slow economy has kept his customers looking to keep their industrial equipment running longer rather than buying something new. That's been good for business at LE.

But Schwindaman is also in demand in another field — one that involves a completely different type of horsepower than his customers at LE are usually concerned with.

Swindaman is one of the country's premier breeders of Clydesdale horses. Even more specifically, black-haired Clydesdales.

It was a specialized market he says his career at Lubrication Engineers — which began in 1981 — made him recognize as soon as he saw it. And for his money, it's the kind of market it's always good to be in.

"Lubrication Engineers, we're a high-end niche market, and that's exactly what the horses are," Schwindaman says. "With a niche market, all they want is that (product). And it's usually pretty well recession-proof."

ON THE JOB

Swindaman has been president and CEO at Lubrication Engineers since 2007. But his time in the industry goes back even further than his 30 years there.

He began working at Southwest Grease and Oil Co. while he was still attending classes at Wichita West High School.

One of his partners in the lab back in those days was Galen Myers, who is now chairman and CEO of BG Products Inc. BG bought Southwest in the early 1970s.



Myers

Myers says he is in no way surprised by his longtime colleague's success.

Swindaman, he says, is able to make tough decisions and stick to them because he

wants his company to succeed.

"He was always a guy with drive and initiative," Myers says. "And you certainly have to have that."

Today, Schwindaman oversees a company that has more than 100 employees in the U.S., including 52 at its headquarters in Wichita. It also has a network of more than 100 distributors and makes products that are sold in 60 foreign countries. Schwindaman is also a member of the Wichita Metro Chamber of Commerce's board of directors.

Success hasn't changed Schwindaman, says another longtime friend, Kevin Edmundson, a partner at Johnston Clothiers.

He's known Schwindaman since the 1970s — even helping him with one of his first suits. Schwindaman has always had an eye for detail, Edmundson says, some-

The Scott Schwindaman file

Title: President and CEO, Lubrication Engineers Inc.

Age: 51.

Family: Wife, Janet; three grown children.

Education: Bachelor's degree in industrial technology, Wichita State University.

Experience: Southwest Grease and Oil, 1977-1981; Lubrication Engineers, 1981-present.

thing he believes has helped Schwindaman put together a team of people that all help make Lubrication Engineers work.

"I know several of the people over there, and everybody respects him so much. They all speak so highly of him," Edmundson says. "He has truly been unspoiled by his success, and that's an uncommon trait these days."

ON THE FARM

Swindaman does look to spoil others, however.

The black Clydesdales he raises and trains on the 160-acre Cowskin Creek Farm near Goddard are highly sought-after animals. One of his biggest clients is Busch Gardens theme park in Florida. He is going to supply it with 20 horses next year to be part of a new hotel attraction.

Need more proof that Schwindaman is a big deal in the world of Clydesdale breeders and buyers? The barn manager at Schwindaman's farm is Keith Mann — the president of Clydesdale Breeders of the United States.

But even with the top-notch help, Schwindaman still does his fair share of the chores once his day at Lubrication Engineers is done.

"If I'm home I do the late chores. I'm out there throwing hay, watering, checking in on everybody," he says. "I basically do the bedtime tuck-in."

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